

Popular Zumba class overflowing with fun, diversity



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Last Tuesday, I walked into Zumba class at Chandler's Tumbleweed Recreation Center ready to work up a sweat and burn some calories, only to find the Republic's very own Edythe Jensen interviewing class participants.

It turns out, Jensen heard about the class's popularity and was there to write a story for the *Chandler Republic*, which ran Friday. She added that a *Republic* photographer was coming to shoot pictures and a video for chandler.azcentral.com.

Great idea, I thought. The class certainly deserves notice. When I joined the center in 2008, Zumba was all the rage.



— DAVID KADLUBOWSKI/THE REPUBLIC

A crowd fills a gymnasium last week at Chandler's Tumbleweed Recreation Center for Maria Perkins' Zumba class.

Fun dance moves to Latin music drew a crowd every week to the center's exercise studio on the second floor.

Then a transfer to the *Republic's* north Scottsdale office forced me to let my membership lapse. When I found myself back at the Mesa office this year and thinking about the Zumba workouts that were

more fun than work, I knew I had to renew my membership. Eager to get my groove on, I looked up the class schedule and noticed the Tuesday night Zumba class was held in a part of the center I wasn't familiar with.

"What does 'gw' stand for?" I asked the young woman at the center's front counter.

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"Gymnasium west," she said, pointing in the direction of the gym.

I quickly learned why. Scores of people lined the walls and filled the bleachers. As soon as the basketball players wrapped up their game, my classmates ran to their places. New to the protocol, I got stuck in the back of the class. Thank goodness the instructor moved around the space.

But my vantage point allowed me to take notice of the diverse group and marvel at how people of various ages and backgrounds had come together for a common interest. Most of the participants were women, but men and children were in attendance, too. The instructor was not the

one I had two years ago, but Zumba had become so popular, the class had to be moved to the gym to accommodate the crowd.

From salsa to mambo to belly dancing, Zumba is a great way to get in shape and relieve the stresses of the day. Because the class involves dance moves, it doesn't feel like work.

And no one is critiquing quality. The only requirement is having fun and getting the best workout for your fitness level.

But now I wonder if the story will encourage more people to try Zumba and whether the center has the capacity to accommodate an even larger crowd. Note to self: Arrive early.

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